If the enemy attempted an offensive across Switzerland, I should thus not find it necessary to ask you to put a part of your forces at my disposition in order to oppose it.

On the other hand, it is evident that this reserved group of armies will work in the general battle as much for the profit of your armies as for mine.

Further, the extension of front which I am asking from you will in a certain measure dispense your armies from pursuing the execution of the offensive operations which they were due to undertake in the course of the winter, in accordance with the decisions taken at the Conference of Chantilly of 15th November last.

Finally, the plan of operations which I have set before you does not exclude the possibility of carrying out, if the necessity arises, the *Flanders* operation aiming at the conquest of *nkdwt"** Ostend and Zeebrugge, since this cannot take place before the summer.

This operation can be studied in all its details on the basis of the decision already adopted, and I even consider that our Belgian Allies ought to prepare themselves from now on for the role they will have to play in it.

If our big offensive succeeds, it is certain that the Belgian coast will fall into our hands as a result of the retreat of the German Armies, and without a direct attack.

If on the contrary our attacks fail, it will always be possible to carry out in due course

the operations projected in Flanders.

In concluding this explanation, I ask you to be so good as to give me, as early as possible, your reply on the subject of the taking over of the front